

In the Claims

Please cancel Claims 1-40, 42, 44, 46-52.

Please amend Claims 41 and 45 as follows:

41. (Twice Amended) A method of identifying an agent which enhances the activity of an isolated [a] caspase or procaspase expressed in immature thymocytes, or an active derivative or fragment thereof, wherein said caspase is necessary for apoptosis, comprising the steps of:

- (a) contacting the isolated caspase or procaspase, or an active derivative or fragment thereof, with a caspase substrate in the presence of the agent; and
- (b) identifying enhancement of caspase or procaspase activity.

45. (Twice Amended) A method of enhancing [a] the activity of an isolated caspase or procaspase expressed in immature thymocytes, or an active derivative or fragment thereof, wherein said caspase is necessary for apoptosis, comprising contacting said isolated caspase or procaspase with an agent that enhances the activity of the caspase or procaspase.

Please add the following new claims:

---53. The method of Claim 41, wherein the enhanced activity results from enhanced conversion of procaspase to caspase.

54. The method of Claim 41, wherein the enhanced activity results from enhanced oligomerization of the caspase.

55. The method of Claim 41, wherein the enhanced activity results from enhanced expression of procaspase or caspase.

56. The method of Claim 41, wherein the procaspase or caspase activity is prolonged.